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538.

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

BY

SIR JOHN HANMER, BART.

"M' apparecchiava a sostener la guerra."

DANTE.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
MDCCCXL.

538.

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I.

ENGLAND.

Arise up, England, from the smoky cloud
That covers thee; the din of whirling wheels:
Not the pale spinner, prematurely bowed
By his hot toil, alone the influence feels
Of all this deep necessity for gain:
Gain still; but deem not only by the strain
Of engines on the sea and on the shore,
Glory, that was thy birthright, to retain.
Oh thou that knewest not a conqueror,
Unchecked desires have multiplied in thee,
Till with their bat-wings they shut out the sun:
So in the dusk thou goest moodily,
With a bent head, as one who gropes for ore,
Heedless of living streams that round him run.

II.

AMERICA.

GREAT people, whom across the Atlantic seas,
Our thoughts, expanding with the space, behold;
And know thy starry front, serene and bold,
E'en as Orion, when the winters freeze;
Thy distance fades by changing moon's degrees;
Peace hovers o'er the middle depths, to hold
On either side her scales of antique gold,
Spanning the depths; but not alone for these;
But that ye come from an ancestral line,
That hence departed, keeping freedom's ways;
And speak the language that the band divine,
And storied memories of great deeds did raise,
When the old world was wondrous; let the sign
Of love shine out betwixt us, in our days.

III.

PETRARCA.

Not vainly didst thou sing, thy lifetime long,
Petrarca, of a fair and gentle dame;
And with the winds fan love's enduring flame;
Wandering the hills and the quick streams among;
For Time hath listened to thy passionate song;
Whose years like pilgrims to Valchiusa came;
Sighing thou wentest all thy days; but Fame
Filled her clear trump with thine imagined wrong.
Then from the banks of that Provençal river,
Soared loftier accents, 'neath the Alps' blue gleam;
And at thy voice rose one, who would deliver
His Rome and thine; oh noble poet-dream:
The Belisarian weeds did stir and shiver
On her old walls, at that electric theme.

IV.

BERTRAND DE BORN.

WARRIOR, and poet, in this balanced day
'Twould puzzle thee, I doubt, Messire de Born *,
To rouse up princes into chivalrous scorn
Of peace, with thy *sirventes;* and bid the array
Of battle gather proudly, with the lay
That stirred King Philip, like a stream i' the morn
Waking the sluggard; as thy speech outworn,
The moon of thy vocation fades away.
For 'tis a staid and reasonable time,
That debt would to morality endear;
Counting the clink of taxes, 'stead of rhyme:
But not the less doth passion's flame appear
Rending the earth, in many another clime,
From the old volcano, though it bursts not here.

* E perchè tu di me novella porti,
Sappi, ch' i' son Bertram dal Bornio, quelli,
Che diedi al re Giovanni i ma' conforti.—DANTE, *Inferno*, c. XXVII.

Bertrand de Born, whose bad counsels to John of England are thus commemorated by Dante, was lord of Hautefort, and a celebrated Provençal poet. Richard I., at a diplomatic conference on the frontier of Touraine, called Philip of France "a vile renegade;" "Ce dont Bertrand de Born fut fort joyeux," says Thierry, translating an old chronicle, "et fit un *sirventes* dans lequel il pique fort le roi de France de commencer la guerre à feu et à sang, et lui reproche d'aimer la paix plus qu'un moine. Mais pour choses que dit Bertrand de Born en sirventes et en couplets au roi Philippe, il ne voulait guerroyer contre le roi Richard; mais Richard saillit contre lui; ce dont tous les barons, à qui déplaisait la paix, furent fort joyeux, et Bertrand de Born fit un autre *sirventes*, pour affermir le roi Richard dans son propos."

April, 1840.

V.

THE STEAM-BOAT.

White wings, that o'er the hyacinthine sea
With joy or hope or sorrow long have sped;
Since first he voyaged whom the Colchian wed;
Bearing lone ships o'er many a salt degree:
A voice came thence where ye were wont to be;
A strange and serpent utterance; high o'er head,
Trailed its dark breath; and with Ixion's tread
A keel passed by, mocking the stormy lee.
Into the rack, far lessening, on it went,
As once that antique lover of the cloud:
While ye to veering winds were bowed and bent;
And Ocean roared with his great voice aloud;
Lashing his waves 'gainst isle and continent,
Vexed with the wake that wheel-borne ship had ploughed.

VI.

WINTER IN THE RIVIERA OF GENOA.

Now the fair face of Nature is obscure;
Ay, if 'tis ever, in this southern clime;
Upon the mountain sits the cloud sublime;
And incense to the Virgin dear and pure,
Ere the tumultuous seas he will endure,
And spread his sails, and to the topmast climb,
The shipman offers. 'Tis the wintry time
When rich men crowd in cities; and the poor
Kindle their fires of wreck along the coast;
Or in slow barges from Lavenza creep;
Bearing her marble for proud Genoa's boast:
And still, at intervals, along the deep,
Dim trails of smoke arise, and then are lost,
Where steamers their rough way undaunted keep.

VII.

THE TWO COLUMNS.

I saw two Columns, by a southern shore;
One, standing in its Dorian majesty,
Simple, and stern, and natural it might be;
So blended with the hills the shape it wore.
But some Cyclopean hand, ere time was hoar,
Had reared it up to Neptune; and his sea
Still bellows out beneath, memorially;
Marking the moments' flight with tumbling roar.
O'erthrown the other, of inferior race;
Spiral and fretted, as a beechen bole,
That thin green stems of ivy overlace;
Between their dates did twenty ages roll;
And still the first, with his Homeric grace,
Stood scathless; lifting up the gazer's soul.

VIII.

THE WIDOW OF EPHESUS.

"Oh weak unstable wandering memory;"
Came forth a sudden voice from an old tomb,
By the way-side, like Pompeii's: "for the doom
Of Ephesus, so, justly clings to me;
Making my love a byword; I am she
Thenceforward called The Widow, since the gloom
Of funeral caverns was my bridal room;
But how that deed unholy came to be,
Ask many a feeble utterance of strong will,
Many a faint priest of fame's divinity;"
So said the mourning voice, and then was still:
But from the thronging drear infinity
Of shades, that answered to the summons, I
Sped, as the heron speeds, under a hill.

IX.

TO THE FOUNTAIN AT FRASCATI.

Not by Aldobrandini's watery show,
Still plashing at his portal never dumb,
Minished of my devotion, shalt thou come,
Leaving thy natural fount on Algido,
Wild wingèd daughter of the Sabine snow;
Now creeping under quiet Tusculum;
Now gushing from those caverns old and numb;
Dull were his heart who gazed upon thee so.
Emblem art thou of Time, memorial stream,
Which in ten thousand fancies, being here,
We waste, or use, or fashion, as we deem;
But if its backward voice comes ever near,
As thine upon the hill, how doth it seem
Solemn, and stern, sepulchral and severe!

X.

A WAY-SIDE LANDSCAPE IN ITALY.

Easter Eggs.

THERE stands a fortress by a Roman way,
With battered base, and dark imperious towers;
And massy grates that scorned the irregular powers,
Colonna, or Savelli, in their day;
But ilexes with foreheads round and grey,
Grow now upon the moat; and slanting showers
Chase sunshine through the open gate; with flowers
The windows high above are bright and gay.
For 'tis the vernal time, when in the woods
Springs the ranunculus; and the holy tide
Of Easter comes, by rituals led along;
And in the streets go flocking multitudes,
With painted eggs, of many a colour pied;
But not so motley as the moving throng.

XI.

SILENCE.

—•—

When at the sound of noon-proclaiming bell,
Quick as the note, throws by his spade the clown,
And from his forehead clears the careful frown,
With which, his work, before, he measured well;
Comes Silence with admonitory spell:
Oh changeful Silence, on the sedgy crown
Of a blue mere as lights a wild bird down,
Watching the air's vibration—thou dost dwell.
Vague spirit, whom nor hymn nor voice evokes;
But gazing Nature from her depths; and so
E'en the cessation of dull earthly strokes
Doth sanctify; behold the feathery snow
Falls on a wood of monumental oaks,
Stern and unmoved; and not a wind doth blow.

XII.

TO THE CHARTISTS.

With doubtful purpose, through the doubtful night,
Your spearheads glimmering in the misty moon,
Why gather ye; and with wild lyric tune
Call up the wondering cocks before the light?
Oh what conflicting sense of wrongs or right
Marshalled ye thus; and in the star-led noon
Of sleep bade forth? Hers is a better boon,
Dear countrymen, than that for which ye fight.
Think ye to utter, as the Sybil doth,
Rugged, and strange, but pèrdurable things;
The world's ordainèd counsel with mad mouth?
Now heavy-laden Time wild stories brings
Of Nostradamus; and the world is drowth,
Gaping for clouds—but Truth keeps the old springs.

XIII.

THE MILLENNIUM.

Darkness and tumult till the thousandth year;
As in the dreary nights, when men lie dumb,
Listening the whirlwind; then pale lights to some
Shine, as the gusty morning climbs the sphere.
The thunders of Time's chariot wheel draw near:
It hath gone by—the dread Millennium*—
Shout, for the world hath ages yet to come;
Rise man, thàt like a bull-rush crouched for fear.
He rises.—O'er the mighty Lombard plain,
By far Transalpine cities, domes and spires,
And baptisteries, sweet charm of mortal sorrow,
Spring up; like flowers dew-glittering, when the quires
Of birds from winter loosed break forth again,
In a new note, from the old that yet doth borrow†.

* The period of the Millennium had passed by; and men again recovering from their fright, and shaking off their torpor, felt ashamed of their long neglect of holy edifices, and everywhere again began to repair and rebuild churches and monasteries in greater numbers and on a greater scale than before.—Hope's *Architecture*, chap. xxi.

† Few things are more interesting than the transition of languages, which probably was in active operation at this time, though the effects do not begin to be apparent to us, until more than a hundred years later.

XIV.

CIULLO OF ALCAMO.

"WHY call those ages dark? from the old speech
By what gradations pass'd the world away,
Ye know not: for your thoughts are dull to reach
(Being late awake) the springing of the day."
I knew the voice was Ciullo's*: he whose lay
In Alcamo the grace of words did teach,
And accent and sweet meaning give to each;
And I, for more still listening, answered "Nay,
If the long avenue of sphynx-like years
Tend to a point of dim perspective now;
Bright in the midst a starry line appears,
Fame's children; and if Dante's sovereign brow
Loftier and nearer shine, or through his tears
Petrarca, seen, though far remote, art thou."

* The few lines attributed to the Sicilian Ciullo, which are said to be the earliest genuine Italian extant, are supposed to have been written between 1187 and 1193.—*See* Mr. HALLAM's *Literature of Europe*, vol. i.

XV.

ORIGIN OF NEW LANGUAGES.

From the bright paths of Time-beloved Aurore,
Changeful as hers, a Sybil's voice proceeds;
And poets hear it, where the lizard feeds,
On some old hill-top ruin, proud and hoar.
They hear, and ask not where she hath been before,
New rising with the trumpet-summoned steeds;
But each her sweet prophetic utterance heeds,
And to himself repeats it, o'er and o'er.
Bird of the morning, rhythmical wild lark,
That to thy song dost beat thine airy wings,
And lookest then in silence to the sun;
Whose deep ordainèd music thou dost mark,
High in the heavens, of thine own the springs;
So was on earth another speech begun.

XVI.

CHAUCER.

WHEN I remember, how, nor separate chance,
Nor restless traffic peopling many a shore,
Nor old tradition with innumerous lore,
But poets wrought our best inheritance;
Sweet words and noble; in their *gai science*
That England heard, and then for evermore
Loved as her own, and did with deeds adore;
I bless thee with a kindred heart, Provence:
For to thy tales, like waves that come and go,
Sat Chaucer listening with exulting ear;
And casting his own phrase in giant mould:
That still had charms for sorrow's gentlest tear,
Telling the story of Griselda's woe,
"Under the roots of Vesulus the cold."

XVII.

ROMÈO.

Four daughters like the lilies, each a queen,
In his Toulouse had Raimond Berengare;
But he who set them in the regions fair,
That loved them, was a man of cheerful mien,
Who on a little mule at eve was seen,
Coming from Compostella: when the air
Breathed evil on long years of prosperous care,
Onward he went arrayed as he had been.
And in the towers of Provence bright and blue,
Through Langue d'Oc, and the city-girded shore,
Where was Romèo, none thereafter knew.
With his old pilgrim's staff his way he bore;
Seen only of the Tuscan*, when he too,
From the world's bitter wrong to heaven could soar.

* Romeo, whom Dante commemorates in his Vision of Paradise, was an unknown pilgrim from St. Jago of Compostella: he was received in the house of Raimond Berenger, and became for many years his steward; being at last unjustly accused of fraud, he produced a statement of all that he had done, and departed as he came. The advice which he gave him, and which became the means of marrying his four daughters to kings, is alluded to in a letter of Machiavelli to Guicciardini:—"Io vi ricordò quel consiglio che dette quel Romeo al duca di Provenza, che aveva quattro figliuole femmine, e lo confortò a maritare la prima onorevolmente, dicendoli che quella darebbe regola ed ordine all' altre, tanto che lui la maritò al re di Francia, e dettegli mezza la Provenza per dote. Questo fece che maritò con poca dote le altre a tre re, onde Dante dice:—

'*Quattro figlie ebbe, e ciascuna regina,*
Della qual cosa al tutto fu cagione
Romeo, persona umile e peregrina.'"

XVIII.

WINTER.

To the short days, and the great vault of shade,
The whitener of the hills, we come—alas,
There is no colour in the faded grass,
Save the thick frost on its hoar stems arrayed.
Cold is it, as a melancholy maid,
The latest of the seasons now doth pass,
With a dead garland, in her icy glass
Setting its spikes about her crispèd braid.
The streams shall breathe, along the orchards laid,
In the soft spring-time; and the frozen mass
Melt from the snow-drift; flowerets where it was
Shoot up—the cuckoo shall delight the glade;
But to new glooms through some obscure crevasse*
She will have past—that melancholy maid.

* "It 'gan out crepe at some crevasse."
CHAUCER'S *House of Fame.*

XIX.

WRITTEN ON AN OLD SPANISH CHRONICLE.

Lest the great deeds of many a passing year
Should down to dusty dull oblivion go,
The noble monk Don Roderic doth show
All things, as in a mirror deep and clear.
How went ambassador the valorous peer,
That was his grandsire, to the Moorish foe;
And heard the voice of Guadalquiver's flow,
By moonlight, when Giralda's shade was near.
Praise to the saints; by those unchristian daughters
Ne'er was he snared, but came true knight away;
And reared over Lleren his gentle towers.
His name was as a shade o'er many waters,
Cast ever as he stood in glory's ray;
And lengthening as came on the evening hours.

XX.

TO A FRIEND.

Dear ———, from those far eastern climes,
Over whose border I was hovering,
Once, as an eagle, whose uncertain wing
Turns backward from the Danube, and sublimes
His flight into a vision, scenes and times
Of travel-quickened thought to ours you bring;
Leading us by the Terek's Lesghian spring;
I, nothing in return can give, but rhymes.
But yet in these, o'erpassing time and tide,
Your name to Casbeck's spirit I commend;
To write it as a stream on his gaunt side,
Whose joyous southern windings may descend
To Teflis, or that sea by which abide,
Rivalling his, the shades of Demavend.

XXI.

TO A PINE.

ADDRESSED IN A SONNET ON SPRING, FORMERLY PUBLISHED.

PINE, whose green branches to my vernal song
Were as the coronal, gracing its close;
Now, forth his painted portals, Autumn goes
Over the woods, that will be bare ere long.
He leads them, reeling like a Thracian throng;
And each in turn his leafy chaplet throws
Down at his feet; only the Ilex knows
A spell superior to the enchanter strong.
He hath a hollow root, in which the mice
Dream out the winter, or some woodland bee;
Yet bravely doth his dusk head front the stars;
Through whose dread gates hath pass'd a century twice,
Since he was planted; flourish thus my tree,
And see a prosperous end of civil jars.

XXII.

THE CRUCIFIX.

O THOU, of temper captious, and of soul
Too dull, save outward things to comprehend;
Whom that small wooden crucifix doth offend;
And water in its pine or beechen bowl;
By which, when bells for Ave Mary toll,
The peasant on these hills doth lowly bend;
Praying good angels will his house defend;
While o'er his sleeping head the planets roll.
Why railest at such ordinance? for thus
Did Augustine, and venerable Bede,
And saints whose names above doth Peter know.
Not as of binding force it comes to us;
But, when the emblem ye abjure, take heed,
Lest ye forget the inner meaning so.

XXIII.

UNSECTARIAN EDUCATION.

Ye who the plumes of wisdom would put on,
Why shun ye then with other daws to perch
Under the ancestral angles of the Church,
In the spring time? though in summer ye be gone,
And make your haunt by some earth-cumbered stone,
In the deep woods; which ye with curious search
Discover: even there, the oak, and birch,
Though different, keep assimilating tone.
And oh fair moon of youth, canst thou not make
Of hard disputed questions vague the lines?
As sea, and shore, beneath thy lustrous wake:
Wise men have loved wide limit*, that assigns
A silent hallowed path, for faith to take,
Where things too great expression ill defines.

* Il faut souvent dans les décisions de l'Eglise s'en tenir à des expressions générales, pour demeurer dans cette mesure de sagesse tant louée par St. Paul, et n'être pas contre son précepte plus savant qu'il ne faut.—Bossuet, *Hist. Var.*

XXIV.

SPRING.

Soft comes the breath of spring, it shakes the pear,
White blooming; like a garden seems the mead,
Thick with young grass, on which the cattle feed,
Tossing their heads at their dull wintry fare.
The bees seek honey through the moving air,
That rocks the wild-duck on her nest of reed,
By the sunlit water: Man doth say "God speed,"
For joy the year's increase so soon to share.
Low, to himself, he says it; where, alas,
Are the old rites? a dullard race are we;
Clear shows of inner feeling fade and pass;
There are no pomps to greet *Eiarine.*
Our hearts reflect as a smoke-darkened glass,
When like a prism of crystal they should be.

XXV.

THE SPIDER.

If any of the Arachnean race,
Fat and well-filled be near, let him beware
Of thee, old Spider; with such stealthy pace
That travellest through the frore autumnal air:
So fierce a hunger drives thee from thy lair,
To feed like Ugolino on thy kind;
Rapine is all before thee; and behind
Thy broken web—that on its film doth bear
Thick drops of cold uncomfortable dew,
Like those which on the dying leaves are spread.
The flies creep doors and window corners through;
Gaunt are thy sides—no more by tree or shed,
Can they that pensile citadel renew,
In which thy gluttonous youth so full was fed.

XXVI.

THE OAK.

Say not that always on immortal things
Did the old Greeks their lyric thoughts bestow;
Not always from his fountain's highest flow
Called they the steed with cloud-surpassing wings.
But the sweet voice of Heliconian springs
Came leaping to their hearts in plains below;
Under some oak: and they the Gods let go;
Hymning his shade to their memorial strings.
Few are they now on the impatient earth,
Those harborous giants, sons of many days;
For time bears hardly on heroic birth;
Bringing vile use to eke his cold decays:
Or hurls them down for winter's boisterous mirth;
But birds and poets still find some to praise.

XXVII.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

It is a misty morning, that may turn
To tears or sunshine; I see nothing now,
But great trees looming dim, with quiet bough,
Over the shadowy deer that cross the fern.
All things seem vague as an oracle, Old Urn,
Wreck of the augurial Tuscan; ay, e'en thou
Hast on thy gloomy side figures enow,
Whose dark ideal sense we scarce discern.
And as I scan them, near the frosty glass,
Whose marks seem like a web, to some near thorn,
Or arbutus, or laurel, loosely spun;
My thoughts, quick rising, to the future pass;
For, out the stillness of this wintry morn,
A New Year hath its solemn march begun.

XXVIII.

THE PINE WOODS.

We stand upon the moorish mountain side,
From age to age, a solemn company;
There are no voices in our paths, but we
Hear the great whirlwinds roaring loud and wide;
And like the sea-waves have our boughs replied,
From the beginning, to their stormy glee;
The thunder rolls above us, and some tree
Smites with his bolt, yet doth the race abide;
Answering all times; but joyous, when the sun
Glints on the peaks that clouds no longer bear;
And the young shoots to flourish have begun;
And the quick seeds through the blue odorous air
From the expanding cones fall one by one;
And silence, as in temples, dwelleth there.

XXIX.

PAST AND FUTURE.

In their unceasing round the seasons come;
Seed time, and harvest, flowers, and fruit, and snow;
And still, whate'er the month-led earth may show,
Time to the future points with many a gnome.
Telling old tales by the tide's ebbing foam,
Stand yet the fishers; ere again they go
Onward over the flood; and ever so
Man looks, as double Janus in his Rome.
Now scans he the before, rather than after;
And as the present fleets, then first doth weigh
In a vain-balanced scale its tears or laughter:
Now, shunning still the unreturning day,
Of fancies on vague hopes a keen engrafter,
"To-morrow, ay to-morrow," he doth say.

XXX

THE ROOK.

Thou skimmest up and down in the blue air,
Year after year, companionable bird,
Making the murmur of thy coming heard,
As a great fleet's, in the still evening glare.
Thou hast the corn-fields in thy tutelar care,
Yet 'mongst them is thy name an evil word;
Ever thy multitudinous flight is stirred
By a young villain set the rooks to scare.
'Tis a churl's deed; but in the quiet night,
When he is stretched upon his pallet board,
Why do ye rise, with wakeful accents so?
Then, 'tis the owlet's immemorial right,
On his vague quest over the dewy sward,
Hearing nought else but muttering winds, to go.

XXXI.

BACCHANTE DOLOROSA.

Under a poplar, in that mournful clime
Whose shadows change not ever, but the stars
Shine out, the cold and melancholy Lars
Of the abode of Gods of the elder time,
Pale sat Agave; weeping for the crime
That stained with her own blood the Bromian cars:
A sistrum at her feet, whose golden bars
Bore long unreckoned tears, like frosty rime.
E'en as some moonlit marble, seemed she there;
That Phidias might have wrought, on the same day
When his unresting thought with Jove's could share:
Still was the place, save when, as in the spray
Of the Pine forest moves the fitful air,
Stole up a low sad voice and sighed away.

XXXII.

SINGING BIRDS.

Sweet is thy voice, embowered Nightingale;
But for thy praise would fail my weaker song;
Sweet all thine airy kindred, that belong
To Nature's happiest haunts, by field or vale:
And some there are, that in the shadows pale
Of cavernous dim towns, make yearn the throng;
Prisoners are they, and blind, yet seems more strong
The melody of their lives' remembered tale.
Ye are the accepted poets; wheresoe'er
Your notes have sounded, joy hath thither come;
As flowers to forest wells serene and clear:
Fame wears ye not, that eats the hearts of some;
Those unambitious accents man doth hear,
And straight the importunate voice of self is dumb.

XXXIII.

ART.

As o'er the sea's deep world-sustaining breast,
Climbing the steep horizon, onward bear
The thought-wing'd ships; and each his track more fair
Believes, for 'tis his own, than all the rest;
Which not the less doth fade as 'tis imprest;
And the great waters, and cloud-traversed air,
With their enduring might, are only there;
And space of days unmeasured, East, and West:
Dread realms of Art, illimitable as ocean,
So fares man's spirit o'er your region waves;
Proudly, and lonely, with a choral motion;
Sunshine he courts, but tempests too he braves;
Seeking the port, where, for their heart's devotion,
Fame lights her star over such seamen's graves.

XXXIV.

EVENING.

It were as easy we should never sleep,
As pass in dreams half-conscious hours away,
Had Nature willed ; or that the unresting Day
Round the great world at once his watch should keep :
But thus 't was set in Paradise ; some steep
Seemed there an altar, as the sinking ray
Flamed on its peak ; and stars had quiet sway,
Till o'er the barriers mighty morn did leap.
Leap morn, and with thy might bear all things on,
Mounting the arch of noon the fiery-eyed ;
Where art thou now, from that mid-height descending ?
Oh still with songs and love thou art espied
Far off, while Eve comes here, with bell and gun,
And the big plashing waves her Moon attending.

XXXV.

ORPHEUS.

I thought of Orpheus, stretched a summer's day
'Neath a green plane-tree glittering in the sun,
While o'er his head her web Arachne spun,
With quiet toil; and he divined his lay,
That deepest things aimed like the gods to say,
Joying the earth with great comparison:
The wild birds went and came, and every one
Clove with a steady wing his airy way:
They turned not from his silence: plants and flowers
Grew o'er the place, more fair than wisest art
Shapes them in temples of bright stones or gold:
Then, with the music of those passing hours
Possest, rose up the poet to depart;
And his lit eye was glorious to behold.

XXXVI.

ANTEROS.

I do believe that who of Comus' crew
Are numbered, tasting of the berry or root
That in man's heart sows such accursed fruit,
Little thereafter have with Fame to do;
Little with Love; that yet with heavenly dew
Watches again their nature to transmute;
Nor e'er forgets how once some wandering foot
With her beneath the stars sweet passage knew.
Oh Love, beware; than Beatrice's strain
If thine be less, or earthlier, thou art snared;
And shoutest to the panther-ruling train
A lost lost song, with all thy bosom bared;
Silenus answers in a broad refrain,
And many-knotted snakes with heads upreared.

XXXVII.

THE BALLOT.

Lest in each vein thenceforth a poison flow,
Making thee one pale mass of quickening ill,
Rife with new monsters 'neath the Moon, until
In some prodigious night a Cæsar grow;
England, abjure the voice, that loud, or low,
With subtle change as if 'twere natural, still
Urges "The Ballot" on thy feverish will;
Thy rights of old were never conquered so:
But men in whom Plantagenet's red blood
Ran bright, or Tudor's, on their cousin kings
Looked sternly, and for popular rights upstood.
Time changes all—if it hath changed these things,
Oh see not yet, within a box of wood,
A place for Peace to fold her famous wings.

XXXVIII.

THOUGHTS UNDER A WALNUT-TREE.

Bright walnut, as along this Rhenish road
Spring greets us both, the hills of Armenie
Rise on my thought; deep forests, where the bee
Rears in your hollow arms her populous brood,
Seeking (like poets) in the solitude
Of consular cities, for sweet store.—Oh tree!
Honey thy kind hives there; but here, for me,
Far-ranging thoughts, of fancy long pursued.
Yet not on o'ergrown cornices of the dead
Lies the great wreath of noble quest, nor 'mid
Vain relics of the satrapies of Rome.
He who would win it for his living head,
Must conquer to himself the power that's hid,
Like lightning in the region, o'er his home.

XXXIX.

ON THE MONUMENT, AT LUCERNE,

INSCRIBED,

"FIDEI ET VIRTUTI HELVETIORUM,"

IN MEMORY OF THE SWISS GUARDS OF THE KING OF FRANCE, WHO FELL AT THE TUILERIES, AUGUST 10TH, 1792.

THE faith and valour of the Swiss, for pay,
But not the pay, this monument records;
Perchance they had it not, and so the words
Duly omitted, leave the rest to say
All that the warriors in Thermopylai
Wrung from their country, for these chaffering hordes;
O Fame forbid that any venal swords
Should feel the living glory of thy ray.
What, 'gainst that terrible and ravening crowd,
What ranked them, but mere traffic, and the instinct
Of camp and guard-room, when they sourly died?
Republicans, to the cause of kings thus linked,
Of palace-stairs and their red story proud,
Think ye with Louis memory to divide?

XL.

EVENING IN GERMANY.

How each sharp hammer of the minster clock
Cuts off a point of time, until the bell,
Up-carolling to the clouds with silvery swell,
The sullen presage like a bird doth mock:
But the day fleets, and the shadow of the rock
Falls opposite to where at morn it fell;
The bees come home, each to her angular cell;
Up to his hostel flies the roosting cock.
Now creep the beggars, some with misery pined
To dungeon-pits; some where the woodland yields
Small shelter, thinned for comfortable fires:
Some to lone huts, such as the shepherd builds
Under a bank, to shield him from the wind,
In an old tree set round with thorns and briars.

XLI.

TO THE SIBYLS.

WHERE are ye, Sibyls, ye who on far shores,
Persic, or Libyan, or Cumæan cave,
Awing the world with age or beauty, gave
Response that Time e'en yet fears and adores,
Still questioning; for each stroke of Charon's oars,
As ghosts of years go by his icy wave,
Sends upwards through the portals of the grave
A vague dread voice, that like an earthquake roars;
And, "when above the dust and unclean bones
Of this vile generation shall be cast
A little earth," some listening seer exclaims,
"Thus shall it be, and thus,"—meanwhile the blast
Of strife goes on; and battling codes, or thrones,
From the blue sky the quiet rainbow shames.

XLII.

VENICE.

Pale queen of the Adriatic, thou dost wear
Thy diadem e'en yet, although it be
Of sad wan stones, and funeral empery,
Like that rude hands from Charlemagne did tear,
With the sacrilege of his sepulchre; but the air
Breathes hot and sultry, and the languid sea
Creeps through thy vague canals, whose apathy
Summer weighs down, with dull and heavy glare.
Not so 'twas in thy summer, which if now
Making men's hearts like theirs who long have past
To their immortal fashioning, it shone;
The piecemeal East might in thy mould re-cast
Rise a Colossus of St. Mark; and thou
Bid him look north, and keep the Pontic throne.

XLIII.

THE OLD FISHER.

Thou art a fisher of Mazorbo; lone,
Drifting a usual shadow o'er the sea,
With thine old boat, that like a barkless tree
Creaks in the wind, a pitchless dreary moan;
And there thy life and all thy thoughts have flown,
Pouncing on crabs in shallows, till thy knee
Crooked as theirs, now halts unsteadily,
Going about to move the anchor-stone:
And when the waves roll inward from the east,
Takest thy net, and for some few sardines
Toil'st, in the morning's wild and chilly ray;
Then dost thou go to where yon bell-tower leans,
And in the sunshine sit, the poor man's feast,
Else abstinent in thy poverty, all the day.

XLIV.

THE FIUMARA.

They say that river, now beneath the sun
Spreading his waste of shingle, broad and bare,
With clear green pools in the shadow here and there,
Doth in the winter like a deluge run;
And not with streams that since the world begun
Were loved, or glorious, doth he fear compare;
So wildly do his nymphs their beryl hair
Toss up and down, nor sight then coyly shun.
And by his rising, so doth fame report,
Far flying as the rack in those loud days,
The chorus of the Mænades remain;
For on his waves come trophies of their sport,
Ivy, and trees uprooted, pines, and bays,
And evermore a fierce exulting strain.

XLV.

FOLCO PORTINARI.

If, Folco Portinari, to thy name
But this had been affixed, to wit, that thou
Buildedst a hospital *, and didst endow
With a large gift, like a river still the same;
Whence many centuries of poor, and lame,
Prayers from pale lips, and looks from speechless brow,
Have blest thee, o'er the blue abyss, where now,
And long ago thou waitest; earthly fame
Scantly had been of thy great use: but she
Who on thy branches like a short-lived flower
Flourished, and fell, the frailest of the tree,
Beatrice, with such sweetness breathed, that power
Grew from it like a spirit, thence to be
Thy witness here, till the all-summoning hour.

* The great hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, at Florence, was founded in 1287, by Folco Portinari, the father of Beatrice.

XLVI.

DESENZANO.

From dust and travel of the Brescian way
Who rests at Desenzano, shall behold
A little trading port, with steamers bold
To tempt Benacus, fair or stormy day;
And the great Alps, and sail-uplifting bay,
Shut from the world save it those wings unfold;
And Sirmio, to whose cliffs Catullus told
His greeting, in that simple mighty lay,
Enduring as the waters; that from out
A thousand springs in the cold hills between
Camonica and Garda gather here *;
Through the blue smoke of whose tumultuous rout,
Two prophet forms, one gloomier, one serene,
The guider, and the guided, oft appear.

* Per mille fonti credo, et più si bagna
Tra Garda, et Val Camonica Apennino
De l' acqua, che nel detto lago stagna.
Inferno. Canto xx.

XLVII.

ON A MONUMENT WITH THE FIGURES OF HOPE AND CONTEMPLATION.

Yes, it is fit Carrara's regal stone
With imaged thought should rise above the dead;
Or softly bow with pale ideal head,
Like cherished sorrow into beauty grown:
These are the forms that joy can look upon,
And then beyond them, like an angel sped;
Lovest thou rather the material bed
Of earthy death—or else—oblivion?
There was no death for that rejoicing spirit,
There should be no oblivion, gaze, so may
Noble and pure perchance thine own become:
Of one in heaven, who on the earth was near it,
The record this; but nothing doth it say;
For Hope and Contemplation both are dumb.

XLVIII.

THE SUPPRESSED CONVENT.

The vine builds o'er the broken convent tower
God's architecture, hiding that of man;
The soft blue brook runs on as first it ran,
Fed by the mountain rills, the forest shower;
Gone is the Benedictine garb, and dower,
Marble, and pomp, and then amain began
Ruin, last phase of beauty; but the plan
That reared these walls outlasts the levelling hour.
To the fair city over Arno's side,
That when its lily on Arcetri smiles,
Doth celebrate the festival of St. John *,
Might such still come as wont to fill these aisles,
The light from darkness in their thought divide,
And let the world, e'en as it will, go on.

* Florence.

XLIX.

GALILEO TO THE GRAND-DUCHESS OF TUSCANY.

Lady, whose gracious intellect could divine,
Long since, the organic powers that guide the sphere;
And sometimes deigned to express the love, and fear,
Such themes can kindle in a heart like thine;
Again that thunder fierce and leonine
Rolls through the twilight on my wakeful ear;
Again the sacerdotal voice I hear,
Banning the truth, as if 'twere man's design:
Aye, as if with my own hand I could plant
Those things within the heavens, to disturb
Nature, and science, from their path serene;
But in his might comes Time, the hierophant;
And never shall another Joshua curb
The sun's due course, till the last day hath been.

L.

A RENCONTRE.

When the chill morning from the mountain-tops
Forecasting, sped its shadows o'er the dew;
And all the cocks, as once for Peter, crew,
Greeting the wind that waved the moorland crops;
Came a foul crone towards me from a copse,
With weeds in her long fingers, dank and blue,
And a sharp hook, that 'cross the air she drew,
Beckoning to me as one that charmèd stops.
And I bethought me, if committed sin
Takes ever elvish shape, then this might be
Image of some of old this wood within;
But then superior to her witchery
I past, for cheerful daylight did begin,
And I the sun through the forest boughs could see.

LI.

EFFECT OF THE SUPPRESSION OF CHANTRIES IN ENGLAND.

Amid this multiplicity of creeds,
This liberty of all that into one
Should knit men's hearts, and of Religion
Thence hath the name, how strong thy tide proceeds,
Deep Rome; as the sea-wave o'er the rocks and weeds
Lifting its utterance, thou dost hold thine own;
Making thy sins, with that harmonic tone,
Seem but as tales that the wild ocean breeds.
Wiser than she, who the apostolic name
Claims emulously, and for her patron Paul;
Self-stripped, denuded of all spiritual awe,
Save from one source; so cold we grow and tame,
Since the sweet voice hath vanished from the wall
Wearily echoing to the parson's saw *.

* When coughing drowns the parson's saw.
Shakspeare.

LII.

POETRY BY THE WAY-SIDE.

WANDERING along the vision-haunted way,
One did I meet, whom straight my heart did know;
But in strange seeming he was pleased to go,
And quaint, as by the forest-brook the jay;
The leaf-hid brook, with one particular ray
That the sun gilds, and of his orbèd glow
Gives thence suggestion to the sense; e'en so
On mine the quick poetic spirit did play,
From a feather in the head of one who followed
A trade associate with the tortoise-shell,
Client of Mercury, through the towns and shires,
A rude Autolycus with hat rain-hollowed;
And still, as droopt fantastically it fell,
The shows of things conformed to his desires *.

* "It (Poetry) doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind."—LORD BACON.

LIII.

ARQUÀ.

Over the vast and seven-vaulted dome
That holds thy shrine, St. Anthony, the shade
Had shifted quite; and in each long arcade,
Hanging its curtain in the sunshine's room:
Onward we went to a memorial tomb,
Peacefully in the vine-covered mountains laid;
And evening came, and the luccioli made
Their road-side flashes in the willowy gloom;
And we with silent and considerate pace
Returned, as what we sought for having seen;
Till rose the turrets of that antique place
Padova in the dusk air.—O home serene,
That wearest by his grave Petrarca's grace,
Oft now I see thee, as in a fountain's sheen.

LIV.

FAME.

DANTE, how many, long ere half their age,
Have thought them in a gloomy wood, like thee,
Astray from the true path; that others see,
And follow, therefore, in the golden page
Of Hope inscribed. But some their battle wage
Then haughtier 'gainst oblivion, and shall be
As thou by Virgil onward led, or he
That over Lethe bore the Sibyl's gage:
One waits their coming; not with tongues and eyes,
As the vain-glorious dream, and her vague throne
Would fill, though 'twere the winds and stars of heaven;
But oft she foils, still points to high emprise,
And they shall know not, till their wrestling's done,
It is an angel, with whom they have striven.

LV.

GERMAN WITCHES,

HEARING OF THE INDULGENCES GRANTED BY LEO X.

I.

Far flies the raven over the German land;
Over brown heaths and castles goeth he,
Perching on tower and city linden-tree,
He hath the earth and air at his command.
What saith the maiden with the jewelled hand,
From her bright lattice, raven dark, to thee,
Noble, and knight, and burgher round and free,
That thou before his gate so long dost stand?
'Tis a wild saying, like the wind's; but eve
Comes on apace; and earth-o'erscattered fires
Shine out, with light and darkness strangely blending:
There is one spot that thou art loath to leave,
Where green-worn steps, by a cathedral's spires,
Two croaking withered beldams are descending.

II.

One saith to the other, wrinkling up her eye,
" Hast thou no sins, old gossip Ursula?"
And she respondeth with a hoarse " Ha, ha,
Well, we were young, but now those days are by;"
She twirls her distaff with a muttering sigh,
And strives to pass; the other still doth bar
The wayside—" It were well to balk the star
Thou know'st of," whispers she, " once ere we die:
Aye, marry, these are comfortable times,
'Tis a good church to balk his spite, that there
Would whirl us but in mockery, like the snow—"
Then, as a rat that some old witch berhymes,
She who doth listen, at the Prince of air
Muttering, goes on, with feeble steps and slow.

III.

She mutters; loud and long for many a day
Hath one been crying; and at eve it went
Still through the silence—"Come, repent, repent;"
But not like John the Baptist's was the way.
Albrecht of Mayence hath his pall to pay*;
Ten thousand florins must to Rome be sent;
Thrice ten; 'tis therefore do they cry "repent;"
And against sins gold in the balance weigh.
The while, beneath Bolsena's shady boughs,
Spurs the great father† of the Church, and swears
This brach or that is keenest at the game;
And crowns at eve some ribald's stupid brows‡
With laurel wreath, and of a patron wears
With jovial pride the Medicean name.

* For his *pallium*, and cardinal's hat, he had to pay 30,000 florins, to defray which the Pope granted him the farm of the sins of Germany.

† Leo was then the guest of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, afterwards Pope Paul the Third.

‡ For a laughable instance of this see a note at the end, extracted from Ginguéné.

LVIII.

MYCENÆ.

THERE's not a dog, nor note of any bird,
Nor shepherd's laugh, nor echo's lightest tones,
Only the lizard on the giant stones
Moves in Mycenæ——moves, for this vain word
Affrights him from his wont, where lies interred
The treasure of Agamemnon; aye, the bones
Perchance, then Greece, in him of all her thrones
The leader, when in Aulis there was heard
The gathering after Helen, and the wind
Sighing among the congregated shrouds,
The waves, the songs, the augurs on the shore.
O solitude far deeper than the clouds',
For voices in their dwellings ye may find;
Here is the sun and shadow, and no more!

LIX.

THE MERCHANT.

NAKED wast thou, at thy birth-time, utterly,
Merchant whose sails are furled; and now the birds
Build under thy broad cornices, and the herds
Sleep in the shadow of thy planted tree:
The waves have borne thee onward, thou may'st see
The stars in new perspective; the full thirds
Of thy great wealth no more are inky words,
Paper and trust, but woods and swelling lea.
Then wilt thou keep the balance in thine house,
Emblem of its just seignory, and the cause;
Or with those harlequin heralds poorly feign?
Keep it, for noble citizenship thus,
And truth, the fountain that doth never pause,
Free from the weeds of folly thou wilt maintain.

LX.

ON A PEBBLE USED IN MAKING GLASS.

White pebble, that man's subtle art ere long
Shall change to crystal, which the bubbling wine
Lights up with gladness, or the eyes divine
Of beauty see within the impalpable wrong,
Their own reflection—now the forest song
Murmurs around thee, a glad rest were thine,
Here on the rock, did always summer shine
These grave columnar woods, and hills among;
But winter comes, like a cold angry cloud
Up-streaming from a glacier, and his shield
Fills all the hollow sky, and shuts the sun;
Then with new fire may'st thou have been annealed,
And I, amid some fair reflected crowd
In thy deep mirror, follow only one.

NOTE.

Sonnet lvii., line 12.

" And crowns at eve some ribald's stupid brows
With laurel wreath," &c.

Mais rien n'égale en ce genre ce qu'il fit pour se moquer d'un vieux poète nommé Baraballo, de Gaëte, dans le royaume de Naples. Ce poète bouffon improvisait et chantait publiquement des vers italiens détestables, où le bon sens, la langue et la mesure étaient blessés à la fois, et il ne prétendait être rien moins que le rival de Pétrarque. Leon X. l'enflamma si bien par ses louanges immodérées, qu'il finit par lui persuader de se faire couronner, comme Pétrarque lui-même, au Capitole. Baraballo demanda très-sérieusement le triomphe, et le pape le lui décerna tout aussi sérieusement. Le jour prescrit, et annoncé longtemps d'avance, cet homme sexagénaire et honnêtement né, dont la haute taille, la belle figure et les cheveux blancs, rendaient l'aspect vénérable, revêtu de la toge et du laticlave, couvert de pourpre et d'or, enfin paré de tous les ornements des anciens triomphateurs, fut conduit au son des flûtes à la table du pontife, qui célébrait dans un repas joyeux la fête de

S. Cosme et de S. Damien, patrons de la famille des Médicis. Après y avoir longtemps fait pompe de son talent par les vers les plus ridicules, Baraballo descendit sur la place du Vatican. Là, sous les yeux du pape, il monta sur un éléphant tout caparaçonné d'or, et qui portait une chaire triomphale ; mais cet animal, en quelque sorte plus sensé que lui, et d'ailleurs étourdi par le bruit des tambours, des trompettes et des acclamations de la foule immense du peuple, ne voulut jamais faire un pas au-delà du pont St. Ange, et Baraballo revint à pied, aux huées de la populace et à la grande joie du pape et de ses cardinaux.—GINGUÉNÉ, *Hist. Lit. d'Italie.*

THE END.

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